

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 05808 060136Z
ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SCUL, PEPR, KN, KS, US
SUBJECT: REPORTED USG COMMENT ON NORTH KOREAN INVITATION TO ROK TEAM

REF: STATE 168903

1. KOREA HERALD JULY 4 CARRIES STORY FROM YOMIURI SHIMBUN QUOTING "SOURCES AT THE U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT" ON THE REPORT THAT THE NORTH KOREANS HAVE INVITED ROK PARTICIPATION IN THE PYONGYANG INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS TOURNAMENT NEXT APRIL. ACCORDING TO THE STORY, THE DEPARTMENT SOURCE HAD DESCRIBED THE INVITATION AS "UNEXPECTED" AND AS REPRESENTING A CHANGE IN PYONGYANG'S ATTITUDE TOWARD SEOUL, AND HAD "CONSTRUED IT AS AN IMPORTANT SIGN FOR IMPROVEMENT IN THE SOUTH-NORTH RELATIONSHIP".

2. WOULD APPRECIATE INFORMATION AS TO WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DEPARTMENT SOURCES MAY HAVE SAID ON THIS SUBJECT. IN THIS CONNECTION IT WOULD BE EMBASSY'S VIES THAT INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN PYONGYANG TOURNAMENT REFLECTS MORE NORTH KOREA'S CONCERN WITH INTERNATIONAL RESPECTABILITY THAN WITH NORTH-SOUTH RELATIONS PER SE.

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3. WITH REGARD TO ACTUAL STATUS OF INVITATION, ROK FOREIGN MINISTRY ADVISES THAT ROK TABLE TENNIS ASSOCIATION HAS RECEIVED LETTER FROM PRESIDENT EVANS OF INTERNATIONAL TABLE TENNIS FEDERATION ADVISING RESULTS OF HIS RECENT VISIT TO PYONGYANG, OUTLINING PROCEDURES FOR OBTAINING VISAS AND HOTEL ACCOMMODATIONS, AND REQUESTING COMPLETION OF PRELIMINARY APPLICATION FORM PROVIDED BY

ITTF AS INDICATION OF TRANSPORTATION AND OTHER
REQUIREMENTS. WE UNDERSTAND FROM KOREAN AMATEUR SPORTS
ASSOCIATION THAT EVANS WHEN HERE INDICATED PYONGYANG
HAD INVITED TEAMS FROM ALL ITTF MEMBER COUNTRIES BUT
NO GUARANTEE THAT VISAS COULD BE ISSUED HAD BEEN GIVEN.
ROK SIDE IS PROCEEDING TO COMPLETE APPLICATION FORM, AND
IS PLANNING TO PARTICIPATE IN TOURNAMENT IF POSSIBLE.
HOWEVER, SO FAR AS WE CAN TELL NO ROK ENTITY HAS AS YET
RECEIVED ANY FORMAL INVITATION FROM NORTH KOREANS FOR
PARTICIPATION IN THE TOURNAMENT AND SOME MOFA OFFICIALS,
ON PERSONAL BASIS, ARE SKEPTICAL WHETHER PYONGYANG WILL
IN FACT ADMIT ROK PARTICIPANTS.
STERN

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Message Attributes

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